THE PASSING OF AN INDIAN BELIEF.

That the famous sun dance of the Ute Indians will in a few years be a thing of the past is the opinion advanced by a writer who saw the recent big dance on the Ute reservation, which continued for three days and nights. The writer's description of the dance follows:

The annual three-day sun dance of the Ute Indians of the Uintah and Uncompahgre valleys, which tradition has said will cut disease and in which three hundred braves took part this year, ended on the night of June 28 at White Rock, in the heart of the desert Ute reservation. For three days and nights the Indian braves danced back and forth and around the sacred trees at White Rock without a bite to eat except such nourishment as could be sucked from a willow switch, and at the end of the weird exercise only the strongest men of the tribe were keeping up to the time of the buckskin tom toms which the medicine man beat.

For years it has been the custom of these Indians to hold this three-day festival. They have been taught since before the memory of the oldest Indian now living that this dance must be held if the tribe would keep ahead of sickness and death. Formerly it was regarded as the balm for all illness, but in late years, with the rapid advent of consumption among the tribesmen, it has been regarded as a knockout blow to the great white plague, and all Indian consumptives in western Colorado and Utah flocked to their legendary Sea of Galilee at White Rock this year to rid themselves of the malady.

Those of the afflicted who were able to dance took part in the exercises until they dropped, and those who were too weak to join in lay on the ground and allowed their more able brothers to do penance for them.

The dance up until late years has been jealously guarded by the Utes, but soldiers from Fort Duchesne and cowboys have been permitted to witness the event for the last five or six times at the rate of a dollar each. The degeneration of the Utes has not been so complete, and the idea of commercialism so uppermost in the minds of the older tribesmen that they will allow pictures of the fete, and although numerous attempts have been made to get photos the Indians have compelled a camera owner to divest himself of the kodak before entering within the sacred arena.

It is likely that the dance will die out within a few years. The older men are weakening in body and influence and the younger generation of braves are too lazy to keep up the time-honored custom, for it entails three days of starvation and an endless prancing around the sacred trees for seventy-two hours or until one drops from sheer exhaustion.